

WINTER 2015 // LIPSCOMB NOW:

# INTERSECTIONS

OF FAITH & CULTURE

**BOLDER FOR THE OLDER:**

*Rethinking Older Adult Ministry*

A RESOURCE FOR CHURCH LEADERS



Travelers gather at the Church of the Nativity in Israel this past July on the trip coordinated by Lipscomb's Lifelong Learning Program.



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# INTERSECTIONS

## OF FAITH & CULTURE

Volume 2 Number 2

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*Intersections Magazine* is published twice a year by Lipscomb University. Go to [intersections.lipscombnow.com](http://intersections.lipscombnow.com) to read more.

**Postmaster:** Send changes of address to *Intersections Magazine*, Lipscomb University, One University Park Drive, Nashville, TN 37204-3951

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# Adaptability and flexibility are key for the future

*We live in a world of rapid change. One of the greatest impacts of change church leaders of today will face is the country's aging population.*

As seniors have historically been the most religiously active of all age groups, this shift in demographics will impact churches and significantly change the religious environment of the nation. Adults 65 and older report that religion has become more important to them over the course of their lives and they are now more likely to attend weekly worship services.

Adaptation and flexibility are key when preparing for this aging phenomenon. In higher education, we continually evaluate workplace demands in order to prepare our students for the jobs of tomorrow—many of which have yet to be created! Beyond the increased need for mediators, financial planners, doctors and family counselors, many additional specialties will be developed to serve the unique needs of those who struggle with their financial, physical and emotional health later in life, and for their caretakers who must bear the additional strains placed upon them. Churches will be asked to provide aging members with counseling services, caregiver support, transportation and other social services.



President Lowry recently spoke at the historic Ryman Auditorium about how Lipscomb plans to boldly face its own future.

Rather than requiring more from their churches, other seniors will become strong resources. They will retire with many productive years to get involved in charity work and volunteerism. Mostly baby boomers, these seniors have spent their lives influencing political, civic and social decisions. They will be drawn to work that provides them an opportunity to make a positive impact on the world. The increase of talented volunteers available for churches and their programs will provide important opportunities to serve and strengthen communities.

Within these pages, you will find resources that will help you plan for

the affects of our aging population. May God bless you as you serve the needs of the aging and look for opportunities to partner with those who are eager to serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. Randolph Lowry".

L. Randolph Lowry  
President  
Lipscomb University



*P.S. If you find this publication helpful, please do two things: email comments and suggestions to [jenna.schrader@lipscomb.edu](mailto:jenna.schrader@lipscomb.edu) and pass it on to a ministry friend!*

# Church growth strategy: Invest in older adults!



A youth minister is the second hire in most churches after a preaching minister. At Lipscomb we are training some of our best and brightest to work with this age group where faith decisions are so critical. Most churches then focus on children: a children's minister or a nursery and day school. This is certainly strategic and needed for today's families. But if churches looked at the demographics, the case could certainly be made that the most important place to focus future ministry resources is with senior adults.

A quarter of the United States population is over the age of 55. By 2050 it is estimated a third of the U.S. population will be over 55 and 20 percent will be over 65. Those over age 80 will be the fastest growing segment of the population for the next 40 years.

Consider also that the 78 million Americans over 55 are the most consistently vocal group in our communities today. These senior adults control approximately 70 percent of the country's disposable income and 75 percent of the financial assets. Senior adults represent \$1 trillion in spending power. This population wants to stay in their current communities, and in their current homes, as long as they possibly can—and they hope churches will help them do so.

Consider what Solomon had to say years ago:

*A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth. (Ecclesiastes 7: 1)*

Solomon says that how we leave this life is more critical than how we enter it. Death is the destiny of everyone, and the living should keep this in mind.

Helping Christians live their final years well and to depart gracefully into the life to come is central to the Church's task. It is never too late to become a believer, and eternal questions face the elderly clear in the face every day.

This issue of Intersections is our gift to help your church rethink ministry to senior adults so they may live fuller, richer lives; are not alone in their final years and die well with eternity in clear view.

This issue is so crucial to the Church today that all three of Lipscomb's living presidents choose to contribute to this issue. **Harold Hazelip** discusses spiritual formation for older adults on page 28. **Steve Flatt**, now president of National Health Care Corporation, shares his expertise on page 6. And of course, **L. Randolph Lowry** discusses the need to adapt to change in his letter on the opposite page.

May your church be one of the first to rethink ministry to this vitally important group within every church community.

Scott Sager  
Vice President for Church Services

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## Best Practices?

Go to [www.lipscomb.edu/servingchurches/feedback](http://www.lipscomb.edu/servingchurches/feedback) and tell us what your church is doing. We'll show it to others.

# Into the community

## Informing the classroom



**Christin Shatzer**  
Director of Service-Learning  
Lipscomb University

### The SALT Program Mission:

1. *Responding to community opportunities through partnership where student projects create positive community impact and advance student knowledge, skills and creativity. By pairing what students are learning in the classroom with service experiences, service-learning demonstrates how we can use our God-given skills and abilities to meet real needs that exist in our community.*

2. *Providing great opportunities for students to apply what they are learning in the classroom to real-world problems.*

3. *Fostering a sense of lifelong learning among students, recognizing that all work allows students to engage with critical questions that will impact the life of community now and in the future.*

**Education and learning is an ongoing process that prepares students for lives of service. As poet W. B. Yeats says, “Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire.”**

Lipscomb University’s SALT (Serving and Learning Together) Program provides students the chance to enhance academic understanding by applying knowledge and skills to service projects that benefit the community. These service-learning experiences allow students to apply the concepts and theories they are learning in their classrooms, to impact the community and to support the learning of new ideas and information.

Undergraduate students complete two community-based projects as a part of their academic studies. The SALT program works with approximately 200 local community agencies, and students collectively contribute 10,000 hours of service each semester. The annual dollar amount of that volunteer impact is \$360,000 invested in the community.

Collaborative work with community partners is vital to the success of the SALT Program. Our hope is that SALT enhances all parties’ capacity to create positive change in the community. Our intent is to develop projects that are equally beneficial to our community partners and Lipscomb students and faculty, where students and faculty are intentional about understanding the work of the community, our partner agencies and their clients.

Among our partners are a number of senior-serving agencies. For example, students studying kinesiology partner with local assisted living facilities to ensure that senior residents are still able to stay physically active through a supportive and guided exercise program. Students in this SALT class meet weekly with senior adults to facilitate 30-minute exercise classes. The programs focus on strength training and balancing exercises—activities that are key in supporting continued mobility and increased quality of life for seniors. Students work one-on-one with senior adults to customize their exercise program.



Lipscomb students studying music are providing weekly concerts at senior centers so that senior adults may enjoy live music. From solo vocalists to pianists to quartets, student musicians bring music to new places to ensure that wider audiences benefit from the joy of a live performance.

Additionally, dietetics students studying nutritional needs at various stages in life provide local community food banks with resources on nutritious eating so that these agencies can better meet the dietary needs of their community clients of all ages. As individuals get older, dietary needs change. So the resources on limited diets for seniors provided by these students have great impact on the overall health and wellness of older adults. This class project is an ongoing effort with different community agencies throughout Nashville.

**If you would like to become a SALT community partner, contact Christin Shatzer at 615.966.7225 or [christin.shatzer@lipscomb.edu](mailto:christin.shatzer@lipscomb.edu).**

# Morning exercises...

## for soul and body

By Earl Manning with Steve Williford  
Church of Christ at White Station,  
Memphis, Tenn.

**“We built it and they have come,” says Leon Sanderson, longtime minister and director of senior adult programs for the Church of Christ at White Station. “It’s building a stronger connection between our church and the community.”**

That was Sanderson’s recent, off-the-cuff response when asked about the congregation’s Community Life Center.

The CLC was built in 2008 as a multi-purpose facility, housing ministers’ offices, a conference room, classrooms and a designated prayer room. It also features a gymnasium, walking track, exercise equipment and locker rooms with showers. Congregation members and neighborhood visitors alike are invited to share in use of the facilities. Many bonds of friendship and fellowship have resulted.

The Common Ground Coffee House inside the CLC is open from 8 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday. Members and guests can drop in for free coffee and snacks. White Station senior adult church members volunteer to greet and serve.

Senior strength and stretch exercises are conducted in the gym twice a week. “Average attendance for exercise runs around 70,” says Jack Bond, one of the fitness class organizers. Roughly one-third are White Station members and two-thirds come from the community nearby. Every session begins with prayer.

### Outreach at the Community Life Center

The work of senior adults is exciting. Through the coffee house and fitness class, several of our neighbors have become a part of our church family.

Rose Marie “Rosie” Baker first heard about White Station five years ago through the coffee house and exercise class. “I had never been in a Church of Christ building. But when Betty Murphree invited me to come to exercise class, I went. The people were so warm and friendly. They all knew my name. I immediately felt the love from these folks. And I soon fell in love with them!”

Still mourning the death of her husband, Baker felt she had found a new family. “The people at the coffee house hugged me and became my very good friends. Then I was invited to come to a worship service on Sunday. From that very first day, I felt so much encouragement from people.”

“Rosie represents what our efforts are all about,” said Freddie Strange, volunteer manager at the Common Ground Coffee House. “We are genuinely glad to see each other. Visitors see that we are sincere in our care for them. It is a forever kind of care. It’s the way God loves us.”

And that’s the way it is at White Station’s CLC. Drop in for a cup... and a chat—anytime our doors are open.

**Earl Manning and Steve Williford are both longtime members at Church of Christ at White Station. Manning served as an elder for 25 years, and Williford formerly served as youth minister and teacher of Bible and speech at Harding Academy of Memphis. Williford writes biographical books, speeches and public relations articles.**



Frequent volunteer leader Betty Murphree and exercise director Jack Bond.

# What's old is new:

## A conversation with Steve Flatt



**Steve Flatt**  
President  
National Health Care Corporation

*Scott Sager met up with Steve Flatt, president of Lipscomb University from 1997-2005 and current president of National Health Care Corporation, for an interview on health care and aging.*

**Intersections:** *You have had a diverse career path in ministry, education, administration and senior adult care. What would you say have been the highlights?*

**Steve:** At 21, I began my career at Lipscomb University in the admissions department, followed by administrative roles in finance and development. At age 30, I began work as the president of Ezell-Harding and then soon after as senior minister at the Madison Church of Christ. I went full-time at Madison in 1990, and then left that great church for the call to return to my alma mater as president of Lipscomb in 1997. For the past several years, I have served at National Health Care Corporation, serving the needs of senior adults as the “longevity revolution” has seen this group grow at such a rapid rate.

**Intersections:** *How has your diverse career prepared you for working with senior adults’ health care and ministries?*

**Steve:** I have been tremendously blessed to be part of some great organizations working with wonderful people. God has been opening doors for me since I was 17 years old, and each has opened a new chapter in my life. While some people feel called to one task for their whole career, I believe God has given me passions to fit each season. I am blessed to have loved what I have been doing since

the beginning. All along the way, I have enjoyed meaningful relationships with wonderful people of all ages. I’ve also enjoyed leading in the development of new initiatives in both education and health care.

**Intersections:** *You speak of the “longevity revolution” in America and the growth of the senior adult demographic. What trends are most noteworthy to you?*

**Steve:** In the last 110 years, we have witnessed life expectancy increase by 32 years (from age 46 to 78). In addition, baby boomers, the largest generation in American history, have been entering their retirement years at the rate of 10,000 per day! As a result, two-thirds of all people who have ever lived past 65, in the entire history of the world, are alive today. Futurist Ken Dychtwald claims that the “longevity revolution” will have a greater impact on our country and its history than either the industrial or technology revolutions of the past two centuries. This means we have to think differently about senior adults, retirement, health care and public policy. It also means churches must respond differently.

**Intersections:** *How would you recommend churches specifically rethink their programs and ministries to senior adults?*

**Steve:** I think that churches will have two challenges related to seniors: how to best utilize retirees who hold years of potential service and how to best serve those in need.

With regard to the former, America (and the Church) is blessed to have more healthy, vibrant seniors than ever before. The age of 65 was originally set as a retirement marker by German Chancellor Otto Von Bismirck when he established Western Civilization’s first government sponsored retirement plan in 1881. While 65 has remained the typical retirement age for more than 130 years, life expectancy has increased by 34 years over that same period of time. The result is that we have hundreds of thousands of retirees who need meaningful work, either in the form of a second career or through volunteer service. Churches need to engage this growing



resource through well thought-out ministries that motivate seniors to serve.

The other dynamic churches face is the burgeoning number of older seniors (usually 85+) who have multiple chronic diseases and who need physical and social assistance. With enhancements in technology and evolving public policy, more of these folks stay at home for longer periods of time. Unfortunately, “home” may not be the safest environment, particularly if the person lives alone.

I believe churches need to fashion ministries that systematically monitor and support the well-being of these seniors. As an example, Meals on Wheels ministries have been operated by some churches for decades. But delivery of a meal a couple of days per week isn't enough. Churches need to create a system of care to give the ailing elderly a sense of security and social engagement.

**Intersections:** *What is an example of a service you have seen work well in a senior adult ministry?*

**Steve:** While I was at Madison, we actually hired a full-time nurse to visit our shut-in and homebound members. Each week the nurse checked the individuals' vital signs, diet, medications, cognition, etc. The nurse then helped oversee a case management system that allowed the church to stay abreast of physical needs, transportation issues, the onset of dementia and other chronic illnesses. That was 25 years ago. We didn't know it at the time, but we were a pioneer in a growing ministry trend that has come to be known as a parish nurse. This is just one example of thinking outside the box to consider ways the Church can bless the lives of its elderly.

# *How grandparents can influence their grandchildren spiritually*

by: **Holly Allen**

**Most grandparents want to have a lasting influence on their grandchildren; they want to pass on their values, their understanding, their wisdom and their faith, but many wonder if it is truly possible to have an enduring spiritual impact on their grandchildren.**

The good news is recent studies show that in fact grandparents can and do influence their grandchildren spiritually in profound ways. These studies offer support for the idea that grandparents nurture children's spirituality through their frequent prayers, their wonderful stories, their clear example, their quiet witness, their availability to share experiences of wonder and their ability to lavish love, grace and mercy over grandchildren in deep need of such gifts.

The prayer life of their grandparents seemed to be a touchstone for many of the children in the studies. The children often mentioned a grandparent's prayer life as a defining characteristic, describing the grandparent as a “prayer warrior” or as being “faithful” or “strong” in prayer. The children often offered examples of when their grandparent prayed with them. Some said they had learned to pray from a grandparent. And when the children described their own prayer lives, they often mentioned praying for a grandparent.

Another way the children in the studies indicated their grandparents' spiritual legacy was by recounting stories they had first heard from grandparents—stories of faith, stories of (divine) rescue, stories about listening to God, funny stories, sad stories, poignant stories. Through the stories the grandparents had told them over the years, the children were able to see that their grandparents knew God. These personal stories add meaning and coherence to their grandchildren's lives as grandparents carry in their very being a sense of history that even their own children,

*(continued on page 10)*



# Allens appointed as new Bible dean, faculty in family science and Bible

**Nationally recognized authors, researchers and academicians Leonard and Holly Allen were recently appointed, respectively, dean of Lipscomb's College of Bible & Ministry and to a dual professorship in the university's family life program and the College of Bible & Ministry.**

Restoration Movement expert Leonard Allen will oversee undergraduate Bible studies as well as the Hazelip School of Theology. Holly Allen is a nationally known intergenerational specialist and children's ministry expert who serves as professor in both the Bible college and the Department of Psychology, Counseling and Family Science.

Leonard Allen brings to Lipscomb strong academic experience in teaching and writing. One of the nation's leading experts on the history and thought of the Restoration Movement, Allen has written numerous books and articles on this era in Churches of Christ history. These writings are often used as resources for churches, faculty, students and schools of theology.

He co-authored a book on the notion of restoration in modern Christian thought with Richard Hughes called *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ* that received thousands of responses from readers who identified with the subject.

"Behind this book was a long journey of struggle, angst and discovery that we tried to present in a very even-handed, non-polemical way," says Allen. "Its publication, it turned out, coincided with a time when a lot of people were asking these questions. We found that the book helped them begin to see a larger world of serious Christian people who each have their own origins as we did."



The Allens, both respected scholars and authors, have been appointed to important positions in the university.

Allen launched Leafwood Publishers, which became part of the Abilene Christian University Press. For the past nine years he directed that combined entity. In addition, Allen has been on faculty at Abilene Christian University, Biola University and Fuller Theological Seminary. He understands very well the faith challenges facing college students.

He holds a doctorate in the history of Christian thought from the University of Iowa School of Religion.

Holly Allen has more than 25 years' experience in educational psychology, intergenerational Christian formation and children's and family studies. She was director of the child and family studies program and professor of Christian ministries at John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Ark.

Allen is published widely and is a highly sought after speaker at academic conferences and in faith settings. Her current research focus is spiritual development in children, and she is writing a book tentatively titled *Nurturing Spiritual Formation in Children*.

In 2012, she co-authored the book *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship*. Allen argues that intergenerational activities and

worship nurtures spiritual formation in all ages. Congregations have tended to divide themselves up by demographics, with separate children's worship, youth group activities and senior ministries. In truth, churches would nurture spirituality more by bringing all these groups together for worship and spiritual activities, she argues.

Allen will teach courses in children's ministry and family ministry courses in the College of Bible & Ministry. Based on her research and studies, children's ministries today also should change their focus, she said. "We have been teaching children *about* God in our churches, but we want them to *know* God, and that is a different enterprise," she said.

Allen frequently speaks to parents, educators and churches on spiritual development across the generations. Her publications and research are being used in courses in more than a dozen universities and seminaries. She holds a doctorate from Talbot Theological School. She is a member of the boards for the Society for Children's Spirituality and GenOn Ministries among other professional activities.

**See Holly Allen's article on how grandparents can nurture spiritual development in their grandchildren on page 7.**

# Longtime Lipscomb professor celebrates a century of life

**When Sara Whitten made her entrance into the world on Sept. 20, 1914, in Lewisburg, Tenn., she was born into a world that was just two months into a war and into a society that was bracing for the unknown consequences.**

As she marked her 100th birthday on Sept. 20, 2014, Whitten celebrated in the midst of a world still struggling to find peace with unrest in the Middle East. It's a world that Whitten has embraced with gusto and upon which she has left an indelible mark—particularly in the Lipscomb community.

Whitten, one of only two alumni who are age 100 or older, spent many of her years on the Lipscomb campus, first as a student and then as a longtime French and English professor. She first set foot on campus as a college freshman in the fall of 1932.

There is likely no one alive today who has personally seen the remarkable growth of the institution that Whitten has. When she arrived at Lipscomb that fall long ago, only a few buildings stood on the campus.

Whitten, who went to high school with a young Willard Collins, two years her senior, had an interest in languages and literature from an early age. At Lipscomb, a two-year junior college at that time, Whitten followed her passion and enrolled in English, Latin and French classes among others. She particularly recalls the impact that Latin professor John L. Rainey and Bible professor Hall L. Calhoun had on her.

"I remember Brother Calhoun especially," Whitten wrote once, "for he made the Law of Moses, the tabernacle and all of that in Exodus come alive in the most interesting way."

She remembers fondly her days as a student.

"We made dear friends who remained friends for life, and our teachers were without

exception good men and women whose Christian example we could all emulate. I am thankful for those two years of my life. I loved the school then and I've never quit loving it," she said.

Following the completion of her studies at Lipscomb, Whitten earned an undergraduate degree from Middle Tennessee State University. She went on to graduate from George Peabody College with a master's degree and from Vanderbilt University with a doctorate.

Her love of language, literature and Lipscomb led her back to campus in 1946 on the heels of World War II, the initiation of the government-funded G.I. Bill and unprecedented institutional growth. Enrollment grew rapidly as a result as did the need for more faculty. Whitten was among a number of men and women who became the backbone of the faculty for years to come including Batsell Barrett Baxter, J.E. Choate, Ralph Bryant, Margaret Carter, Bob Kerce, Ira North, Morris Landiss, Axel Swang and Thomas Whitfield.

She joined the faculty as the university added a junior year to its offering and also underwent a facilities expansion that stands as a pivotal growth point in the institution's history.

For the next 14 years, Whitten inspired students to love languages, most notably French. In 1960, she left Lipscomb to pursue other career opportunities, but returned to the faculty in 1972 and remained until her retirement in 1986. She not only taught classes, but also shaped the department for many years as chair.

Whitten, who does not have biological children, says she thinks of her students through the years as "her own."

"I'm just so very proud of my past students," says Whitten, who has been a member of Hillsboro Church of Christ in Nashville since 1946. "I'm just so thrilled when one of them succeeds or does something well. You may say



that I don't have any children or grandchildren, but I have lots of children—they are my former students and they are my best friends."

Teaching has brought Whitten much joy.

"I enjoyed all of my teaching," Whitten says. "Of course I taught French and English both. I enjoyed freshman French very much, when it clicks and they learn how to speak it."

Whitten is staying busy in her retirement "doing the things I like to do" such as reading, playing a little bridge, spending time with friends and going to ladies' Bible class.

"I'm free to do each day what I feel like doing," she muses. "I think that it's the lack of pressure that I enjoy the most. It's the freedom to be what I want to be."

Although she has no plans to slow down any time soon, Whitten says she does think about what she looks forward to in heaven.

"Being in the presence of my Savior for the first time would be wonderful," she says. "I've always wondered what it will be like and don't have much of an idea. But I know it will be a wonderful place, and I hope I can make it."

For more information on Lipscomb's senior alumni programs go to [www.lipscomb.edu/alumni/senior-alumni](http://www.lipscomb.edu/alumni/senior-alumni).

their grandchildren's parents, may not yet have grasped.

Another unique spiritual blessing that grandparents can bestow on their grandchildren is the rare commodity of unhurried time. All children crave love and attention, and when grandparents have the time to sit, play or just enjoy their grandchildren, it helps children to comprehend that they are cherished and valued. Many of the comments in the research revealed that children appreciated the time their grandparents spent with them just talking, reading the Bible or stories together or praying together. When grandparents allow this unhurried shared time to happen, they are nurturing their grandchildren spiritually.

Grandparents long to hold a place of honor and importance in the hearts of their grandchildren. They hope to influence the new generation, to pass on their values and their faith. The children in these studies attest to the fact that they see, they notice, they are witness to the ways their grandparents live lives of faith before them. They are beneficiaries of the love that is bestowed on them, the grace and the blessing that grandparents pour over them. They receive and carry into their futures the experiences and memories of grandparents who knew God.

### **Recent studies regarding grandparents' spiritual influence**

*"The Spiritual Influence of Grandparents," Christian Education Journal*

*"The Religious Dimension of the Grandparent Role in Three-Generation African American Households," Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging*

*"Are Religious Grandparents More Involved Grandparents?" Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*

*"The Legacy of Grandparenting: Childhood Experience with Grandparents and Current Involvement with Grandchildren," Journal of Marriage and the Family*

*"The Influence of Grandparents on Grandchildren's Value Formation: Assessing the Perspectives of Grandparents and Grandchildren," The Gerontologist (Program Abstracts: 57th Annual Scientific Meeting)*

*"Grandparents and Grandchildren: A 'Memory Box' Course Assignment," Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*

#### **Holly Allen**

*Professor of Family Science and  
Children's Ministries  
Lipscomb University*



# Grow lovely growing old

**Years ago, as I was practicing social work in a Christian child care agency, I came across the words of the following poem, the author of which was identified as unknown:**

*Let me grow lovely growing old, so many fine things do;  
Laces and ivory and gold, and silks need not be new.  
For there is healing in old trees.  
Old streets a glamour hold.  
Why may not I, as well as these,  
grow lovely growing old?*

That poem, so simple in sentiment, spoke volumes to me as a young social worker. It planted a seed that, in God's time, bloomed in the intersection of opportunity and providence, when I left child care to become a social worker with Adult Protective Services. Suddenly, the poem I once thought beautiful became more than printed words. Those words took on life as I saw them in the eyes, heard them in the words and felt them in the determination of countless aging people I



served. Perhaps you recognize them as well in memories of those you know. Among the many, I think of three special people whose faces I see as I ponder the meaning of *growing lovely growing old*.

Ms. Annie was a slight woman, weighing less than 100 pounds. She and her husband had done everything together in life, including becoming ill with cancer. The first time I met Ms. Annie, I could see wire through her fragile skin where she, years prior, had heart surgery. Though she lost two children early in life and became a widow amidst her illness, Ms. Annie had not become embittered. She knew the length of her life was limited but refused to relinquish its depth. Her words from a particular visit ring in my head still today, "As long as the Lord lets me live, there's somebody I need to bless." The client I had come to help taught me a lesson of eternal significance. That precious woman with a fragile frame held a heart with unwavering focus. She *grew lovely growing old*.

Ms. Mary lived alone in subsidized housing at the time I met her. Diabetes had taken most of her eyesight. Her husband, a veteran, preceded her in death. Wary of strangers, Ms. Mary was insistent she was doing well and didn't need help. When I wondered aloud about her housing situation, Ms. Mary told me, without hesitation and unprompted, she didn't owe any rent. She then led me to the bedroom, opened the drawer of a small nightstand, and took out the flag, still neatly folded from her husband's funeral a few months earlier. Her back straightened, and she appeared to grow inches right in front of me, as she looked me in the eye and told me it was that flag which gave her the right to live without rent. Recognizing the depth of Ms. Mary's need and the potential harm if I had not been able to engage her, I followed her lead. When I explained I was also there "because of the flag" and worked for the same government that gave her that flag, Ms. Mary's countenance changed; she then saw her need (and my help) through a lens of honor. She could trust the stranger who honored her husband's service, whose help was, in her mind, purchased by his sacrifice. She was willing to work with someone who knew he had *grown lovely growing old*.

Mr. Walter and I met for the first time as we discussed the needs of his wife, who was in the latter stages of her life. Multiple health problems caused the wife gradually to lose most of her functioning, both physical and mental. Many folks encouraged Mr. Walter to consider out-of-home placement, but he was resistant. Mr. Walter explained that he had married his wife and had promised to always take care of her; he was, in his opinion, keeping that promise by keeping her at home. I was grateful when Mr. Walter agreed to allow me to support him in caring for his wife, especially as he reminded me frequently, he was "not past going." I knew those words were Mr. Walter's way of renewing his commitment and taking control, in spite

*That precious woman with a fragile frame held a heart with unwavering focus. She grew lovely growing old.*

of his own declining health. Nearly a year later, Mr. Walter called one morning and said, "I wanted to let you know my wife passed this morning." I expressed my sympathy, to which Mr. Walter responded, "I kept my promise and took care of her, because I wasn't past going." Precious words of grief and victory rang in his voice, as I was reminded of the cost and reward of genuine commitment. He had demonstrated what it meant to give his all to ensure his wife *grew lovely growing old*.

Amidst all the academic content required to prepare social work students to be keepers of the hope, and to touch the world for God, I believe there is none more important than the sentiments of that poem I encountered, echoed in lessons I learned from the lives of these three people. Would that each Lipscomb social worker:

1. Seek to bless someone each day of life,
2. Rely on honor as a bridge to helping those in need, and
3. Support determined hearts when physical strength declines.

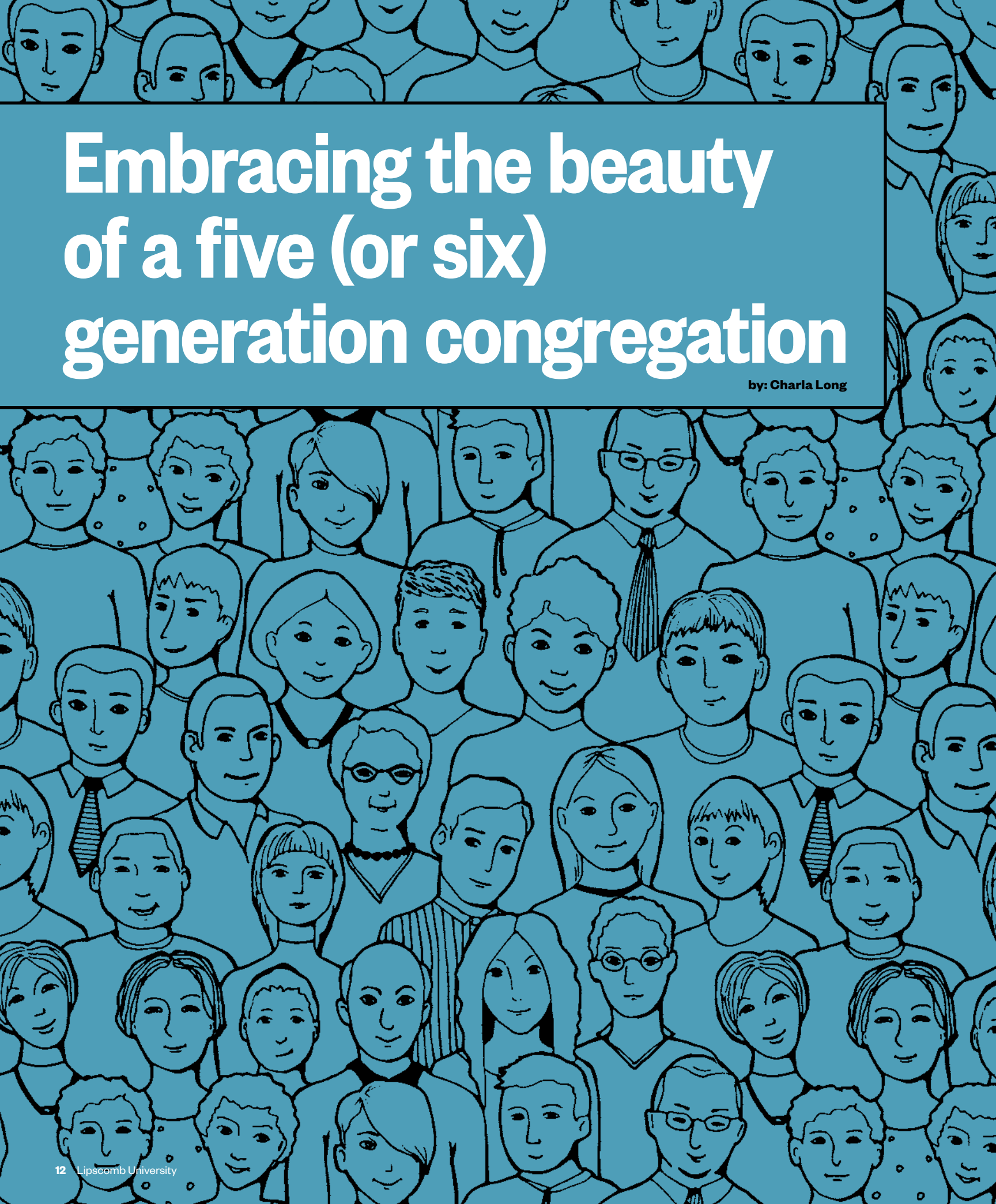
*Lipscomb social work students complete more than 500 hours in a field placement agency prior to graduating with the BSW degree. All students complete required course work addressing the special experiences, strengths, challenges and needs of aging individuals.*

*Settings in which students work specifically with the aging include senior citizen centers, retirement communities, mental health service and counseling agencies, Alzheimer's units and nursing homes.*

*For more information on the Lipscomb University Department of Social Work and Sociology, go to [lipscomb.edu/socialwork](http://lipscomb.edu/socialwork).*

**Hazel Arthur**  
Director and Chair of Social Work  
Lipscomb University





# Embracing the beauty of a five (or six) generation congregation

by: Charla Long

## On Sunday mornings when I was growing up, my daddy drove the church van that picked up the older ladies who were unable to drive to and from services. I would get up especially early so I could ride along the route with him because these ladies were like my grandmothers.

Since both of my grandmothers died when I was very young, these ladies came to mean the world to me. They would listen attentively as I recounted my week's activities, then they would share their stories, sprinkling in good advice for me to follow.

Although I recall this childhood experience with great fondness, I regret that my children do not have a similar church experience. You see, on most Sundays, it is highly likely that my children will never have a truly substantive conversation with anyone outside their age group—except for the occasional Bible class teacher who takes a serious interest in them.

The beauty found in the conversations on the “old ladies’ bus” (as I used to call it) seems to become lost in our congregations today. I believe with

intentional, deliberate effort, our congregations can become the multi-generational body that God called them to be, especially given the current demographic shifts in our society.

On almost any day of the week, you will likely encounter a news story about the United States’ aging population. Advancements in public health, medicine and nutrition have led to longer life spans, and the average life expectancy is anticipated to grow into the mid-80s in the near future. It is predicted that this will cause the 65 and older population in the United States to double by 2050.

When looking at the 2010 U.S. Census Data, you can see how the population is distributed today (see below).

The aging of our population and living in a six-generation America has wide-ranging implications for our society and for churches. Understanding the needs of each generation and intentionally building a multi-generational congregation is consistent with God’s vision for His Church. Throughout Scripture, God used one generation to build upon the foundation of a previous generation.

In *Five Huge Benefits of Being a Multi-Generational Church*, Drew Hensley shares his thoughts on why a congregation would want to deliberately pursue a multi-generational composition. First, a multi-generational church has “seasoned” individuals able to serve as elders and to shepherd the flock. A church with all young people lacks the wisdom needed in leadership roles.

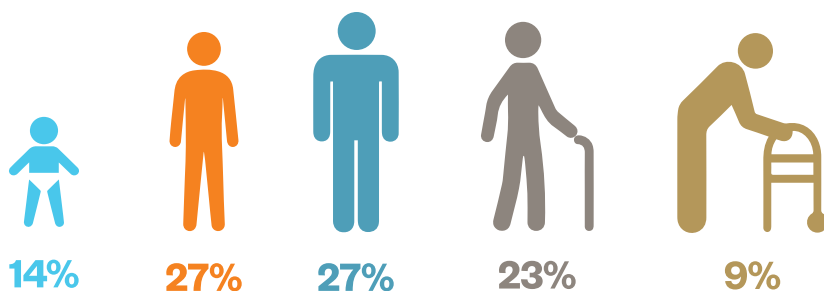
Second, there are opportunities for mentorship amongst the generations, helping to ensure legacies of faith. Young mothers and fathers need the mentorship of others who have raised faithful children. Third, it reflects a typical family unit and allows those without grandparents or grandchildren nearby to have those relationships with others in their congregation. Everyone deserves and desperately needs an “old ladies’ bus” experience.

Fourth, it enables sacrificial service as each generation helps another generation with its particular needs. For example, younger generations can help older generations with yard-related duties, while the older generations can prepare food for families welcoming a new baby. Last, it helps sustain congregations beyond one generation of membership. Many congregations are dying, as the vast majority of their members leave this earth for heaven.

The benefits of a multi-generational church are not being experienced in their fullness in most congregations. Today, congregations offer classes, programs, small groups and special activities segmented by age or one’s stage in life, such as Bible classes for parents of elementary-aged children or potlucks for “golden agers,” as one congregation calls their older adult ministry. In an effort to better meet the needs of a specific group of people, many congregations have placed generations in silos and created barriers to realizing the benefits described above.

ASK YOURSELF: Does my congregation reflect the population of the United States?

## U.S. Population by Age



Younger than 10

10-29

30-49

50-69

70 or Older

 **The Greatest Generation (1924 or earlier) and the Silent Generation (1925-1945)**

- Built the nation and shaped churches
- Faithful stewards
- Higher percentage of this population claim “Christianity”
- Gender role distinguished

 **The Boomers (1946-1964)**

- “Church” is more about personal relationship
- Many quit church after kids are raised

- Would prefer to go on mission trip than give money for it
- First generation with 50 percent or more divorced

 **Generation X (1965-1983)**

- Only one-in-seven attend church
- Short attention span
- Highly tolerant of diversity
- Do not always believe in what is considered “true”
- Does not see the use in marriage

 **Millennial Generation (1984-2003)**

- Grown up with technology
- See themselves as spiritual, not religious
- “Family” is redefined
- Materialistic and wired
- Multicultural and global

 **iGen (2004-Present)**

- Not much is written or known about this generation yet.

**ASK YOURSELF:** What can I do to deliberately enhance multi-generational experiences in my congregation?


## Generational Characteristics

Five strategies to assist congregations in seizing the opportunity to create a vibrant and respectful multi-generational church family that leverages the contributions each generation can make in God’s beloved Church.

### Strategy #1—Recognize and understand your congregation’s generational differences.


All individuals see life through their own set of lenses. Generationally, studies show that the different generations see church differently too. The chart above lists key characteristics for each generation and is based on generalizations drawn on the 30 to 80 million people represented in each category and is not intended to say that all people in this age reflect these characteristics.

These differences may or may not exist in your congregation, but you should take the time to discover the needs of each generation.

 **ACTION ITEMS:** Hold listening sessions with members from all generations to learn about their needs and expectations from a church family. Seek to better understand their perspectives on worship and Bible classes, small groups and ministry opportunities. Determine how each generation would prefer to interact with and relate to other generations.

### Strategy #2—Share your learning with the congregation.

It is important to openly communicate with your congregation the desire to become an integrated, multi-generational church. We know most generations, especially younger generations, value open and transparent communication, and providing these individuals the opportunity to shape the effort will ensure their participation and support.

 **ACTION ITEMS:** Feature a sermon series on the benefits of a multi-generational church. Offer a Bible class series on how God uses the contributions of different generations to grow and sustain His Church. During these series, share the information gathered during listening sessions. Summarize the needs and perspectives of the generations represented in your church. Establish times to seek additional feedback based on the shared information.

**“Even when I am old and gray,  
do not forsake me, my God,  
Til I declare your power to the next  
generation, your mighty acts to all  
who are to come.”**

Psalm 71:18



## Strategy #3—Allow for multi-generational input into important decisions of the congregation.

When making decisions, congregational leaders should always discuss the impact a particular decision will have on each generation represented in their church. If possible, involve individuals from generations not represented in the congregation's leadership team because Gen X and Millennials want to have input and want to volunteer for leadership roles. Perhaps your congregation could establish a multi-generational team to assist with planning worship or selecting Bible class offerings.

**ACTION ITEMS:** In order to train up the next generation of church leaders, create a committee or task force to address specific areas of concern and make recommendations to the eldership. Create ways to solicit feedback from all generations on a regular basis and provide opportunities for leadership.

## Strategy #4—Seek to build an age-diverse congregation.

If your congregation is heavily weighted in one or two generations, actively seek opportunities to better balance your generational composition. Look at your neighborhood and see if your congregation reflects the neighborhood in which your building is located. If it doesn't, congregational leaders should determine if there is a commitment to become more generation-diverse.

**ACTION ITEMS:** Select a multi-generational team to create a plan for increasing outreach into your local community. Identify individuals in your congregation who can lead outreach efforts to their specific generations. Eliminate or discourage words that create generational divides. Review age-segmented offerings to determine if multi-generational offerings would be more appropriate.

## Strategy #5—Examine teaching style to ensure learning styles of different generations are being met.

Each generation learns in a different way. For some, a fill-in-the-blank Bible class workbook is most appropriate. For others, they seek to have content delivered online, in digital form. Congregations seeking to be multi-generational must customize offerings to meet the learning style of each generation. Wednesday night Bible classes that require young people to sit at a desk and quietly complete a Bible worksheet will not engage the iGen attendee. Gone are the days of flannel board lessons... at least for most generations.

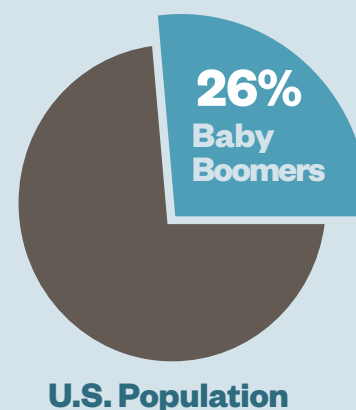
**ACTION ITEMS:** Review your congregation's educational program, including the delivery mechanism. Determine if these offerings are tailored to the specific needs of the targeted generation. Discover ways to make content available online and on-demand to members. Invest in adaptive learning content built on a gaming platform to entice young learners to more quickly acquire greater Biblical knowledge. Create opportunities for members to make virtual connections, outside of normal worship and class hours.

By embracing some of the action items contained in these five strategies, your congregation can become a multi-generational church that values the contributions of all its members and mirrors a family more closely.



**Charla Long**  
*Founding Dean of the  
 College of Professional Studies  
 Lipscomb University*

**The Pew Research Center states that, "As the year 2011 began on Jan. 1, the oldest members of the baby-boom generation celebrated their 65th birthdays. In fact, on that day, today, and for every day for the next 19 years, 10,000 baby boomers will reach age 65. The aging of this huge cohort of Americans (26 percent of the total U.S. population are baby boomers) will dramatically change the composition of the country. Currently, just 13 percent of Americans are ages 65 and older. By 2030, when all members of the baby-boom generation have reached that age, fully 18 percent of the nation will be at least that age."**



# The silver tsunami

The need for workers skilled in working with older adults, both in community and in facilities will grow with every year that passes. Opportunities for faith communities to minister to older adults as they continue their spiritual journey will grow even more necessary.

Lipscomb University, through the School of TransformAging®, sees a vital role that it can play in the education of the next generation of those who care for older adults, whether it be physically, spiritually, emotionally or financially. Established in 2011 by Charla Long, founding dean of the College of Professional Studies, the school had the vision from the beginning that the needs of older adults in the community were a growing issue. Long called it the “silver tsunami.”

Thus the goal of the School of TransformAging is to “lead transformation in aging services.” As one of the few universities in the country with this all-inclusive approach to the topic, Lipscomb is on the cutting edge of recognition of a growing need for workforce development.

The curricula of the School of TransformAging focus on a holistic approach to education of leaders in the aging field. Courses which make up the requirements for the Master’s in Professional Studies in Aging Services Leadership cover leadership, ethical issues, innovations, elder mediation and intergenerational conversations, aging policy and finance, legal issues, spiritual formation, the care continuum and delivery systems.

## By the Numbers → The Aging Population Based on 2012 Research.

- The older population (65+) numbered 43.1 million in 2012, an increase of 7.6 million or 21 percent since 2002.
- About one in every seven, or 13.7 percent, of the population is an older American.
- Persons reaching age 65 have an average life expectancy of an additional 19.2 years (20.4 years for females and 17.8 years for males).
- Older women outnumber older men at 24.3 million women to 18.8 million men.
- Older men were much more likely to be married than older women—71 percent of men vs. 45 percent of women. In 2013, 36 percent of older women were widows.
- About 28 percent (12.1 million) of non-institutionalized older persons live alone (8.4 million women, 3.7 million men).
- Almost half of older women (45 percent) age 75+ live alone.
- In 2012, about 518,000 grandparents aged 65+ had the primary responsibility for their grandchildren who lived with them.
- The 65+ population is projected to increase to 79.7 million by 2040.
- The 85+ population is projected to increase to 14.1 million by 2040.
- Social Security constituted 90 percent or more of the income received by 35 percent of beneficiaries in 2011 (22 percent of married couples and 45 percent of non-married beneficiaries).
- Over 3.9 million elderly persons (9.1 percent) were below the poverty level in 2012. This poverty rate is statistically different from the poverty rate in 2011 (8.7 percent).

The School of TransformAging also offers two certificate programs:

### **Pastoral Care and Aging**

This 15-hour program is a great option for professionals serving in ministry roles in churches and other faith-based organizations, as well as to people of faith working in secular fields such as social work and education. Courses in this certificate program include an interdisciplinary study, spiritual formation in the aging and aged, community and congregational resources, elder mediation and intergenerational conversations as well as a capstone project.

### **Aging Services Leadership**

This 30-hour program includes courses in leadership in aging services, care continuum and service delivery, legal issues in aging, and elder mediation and intergenerational conversations. Many students who take the courses in the certificate program go on to complete the master's degree. Courses are offered in a blended format, combining the best of online and classroom learning, allowing students to complete the program in one year.

Additionally, Lipscomb's School of TransformAging and Bible college have launched a Master of Arts in Christian Practice degree program. Students take 15 hours of Bible core courses in addition to 15 hours in the pastoral care curriculum to earn a master's degree.

**For more information on aging programs at Lipscomb, go to [lipscomb.edu/transformaging](http://lipscomb.edu/transformaging) or call 615.966.1015.**

**Beverly S. Patnaik**  
*Director of Academics*  
*School of TransformAging®*  
*Lipscomb University*



# INTERSECTIONS *Recommends...*

The Tennessee Governor's Foundation for Health and Wellness, through its Healthier Tennessee initiative, is now offering "Small Starts @ Worship," an online wellness toolkit for faith communities. It is available at no cost to congregations across the nation at [www.healthierTN.com](http://www.healthierTN.com).

Small Starts @ Worship provides faith leaders with tips, ideas and actions to help members get healthier together. It is simple to use and can be adapted for congregations of all sizes. The toolkit is optimized for use on desktops, tablets and smartphones.

The foundation's Healthier Tennessee initiative is offering free, easily accessible ways for congregants to be more active, eat healthier and not use tobacco.

healthier  tennessee



THE  
GOVERNOR'S  
FOUNDATION  
FOR  
HEALTH  
AND  
WELLNESS

# Making our later years our greater years



**Amy Hamar**  
Director of Senior Alumni Programs  
Lipscomb University

“As long as you live, keep learning how to live.”

These are the inspiring words of Latin philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca, who believed that learning is a process that begins at birth and remains a continuous, lifelong pursuit. The World Health Organization has a modern take on this idea that they call “active aging,” defined as “the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.”<sup>1</sup>

The 1990s was a decade of milestones in brain research. In 1993, the first Alzheimer’s risk factor gene was identified. Also that year, the FDA approved the first drug for treating Alzheimer’s symptoms. In the 2000s, efforts to support continued research were established, further anchoring the work of the Alzheimer’s Association (est. in 1980) and paving the way for new studies, initiatives and treatments.<sup>2</sup> Along with these developments, it was verified that a challenged and stimulated mind promotes a healthy brain and may be the key to a vibrant life for those entering retirement years and beyond. Benefits of keeping the mind engaged are numerous: increased memory function, heightened self-confidence, emotional health and well-being. According to

data from the U.S. Census Bureau, there are nearly 80 million baby boomers. This group is now either in retirement or is preparing for it.

Just about everyone is a lifelong learner in one way or another, whether they participate in formal or informal learning. Reading the newspaper, working a crossword or Sudoku puzzle or just reading a book are all forms of informal learning. A more formal type of lifelong learning is continuing education for mature adults, comprised of non-credit courses, educational travel, volunteerism, community service and social engagement. Thanks to a wide variety of opportunities offered in this type of learning, older adults now have the chance to make their lives more exciting and enriched. Incorporating learning into our “after-50

years” means our bodies will be more active, our minds more stimulated and our spirits more fulfilled. A healthy mind, body and spirit are extremely important as people age, and lifelong learning is a wonderful avenue by which to strengthen these connections.

Studies have been conducted at many research facilities,

including Harvard, Duke and Johns Hopkins universities, that reveal keeping brains stimulated as people age will help them retain mental alertness. Education and continued learning play a vital role in this—such an important role that lifelong learning is often referred to as a “health club for the brain.”

Lifelong learning not only engages the mind but it engages the body as well. Programs often offer ways to incorporate physical activity into our daily lives. Along with traditional lecture courses offered, most programs offer fitness and wellness courses that are age appropriate for those over 50. These could include weight lifting, bicycling, yoga, aerobics, gardening and nutrition, just to name a few. Regardless of the level of activity, keeping the body engaged encourages us to keep moving, which is valuable, especially as we age.

Lastly, lifelong learning engages the spirit. It provides great opportunities for much-needed social interaction that is often lacking as people age. Many older adults join programs as much for the social aspects as for the learning. Outdoor field trips, luncheons, social events and travel learning where the world becomes the classroom give mature adults an avenue by which to make new friends and engage in stimulating discussions. Lifelong learning is a fantastic way to avoid loneliness and enjoy life surrounded by people who are embracing their later years and the excitement that comes with it.

When you look at the benefits of lifelong learning, it is amazing. Making it a part of our later years keeps us engaged physically, mentally and spiritually and serves as a health club for our minds, body and spirit. It equips us with continued growth, intellectual stimulation and social engagement, which lead to a more enjoyable,





fulfilling and enriched life. Without a doubt, lifelong learning helps ensure that our later years will become our better years—richer, more stimulated and much more fulfilled—truly an exciting multi-dimensional life.

**Lipscomb University's Lifelong Learning Program offers adults of all ages an opportunity to expand knowledge and explore new ideas in an informal setting with one's peers. All courses are non-credit courses and there are no exams or grades given. Classes are scheduled during fall and spring semesters. Special opportunities, as well as travel learning, are also offered each semester.**

**For the entire schedule visit [lifelonglearning.lipscomb.edu](http://lifelonglearning.lipscomb.edu).**

1 See [www.who.int/ageing/active\\_ageing/en/](http://www.who.int/ageing/active_ageing/en/).

2 For detailed information on milestones in Alzheimer's and brain research, visit [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org).

# Turn the page... and get ready to enhance your ministry!

**The Summer Celebration 2014 Resource Kit is ready online...but here's a sneak peek!**

The Summer Celebration Resource Kit—*Reviving the Mission: Insights from Joshua*—provides 10 videos of the keynote speeches and study guides, additional discussion questions, resources and supplements to guide you through the amazing story of Joshua.

To get you started, we've included one study guide and two sets of discussion questions on the next two pages. But you can find all 10 videos and resource materials online by following these easy steps:

**Visit [summercelebration.lipscomb.edu](http://summercelebration.lipscomb.edu) and click on "2014 Resource Kit."**



Click on "Joshua Study Guide and Discussion Questions"



Print the Joshua Study Guide and the Joshua Discussion Questions.



View the videos of each Summer Celebration speaker by clicking on "YouTube links."

**With this resource kit in hand, our hope is that your faith can grow deeper as the challenge to revive your mission is reinforced in you and those you influence. Turn the page and enjoy!**

**ALSO**

Visit [summercelebration.lipscomb.edu](http://summercelebration.lipscomb.edu)  
for more information on Celebration 2015!

# Reviving *the* Mission

insights from Joshua

Study Guide John Mark Hicks

LESSON 4: “STEPPING INTO GOD’S FUTURE”

(JOSHUA 3:1-17)

1 Read **Joshua 3:1-17**

2 Watch **the keynote**  
bit.ly/sc2014hicks

3 Read the  
**study guide**

4 Discuss  
**the questions below**

God is always the hero of any biblical story. His people sometimes do great things in faith, but any power they demonstrate is only because of God’s power made manifest for His purposes. The text of Joshua 3 emphasizes God as the hero of Israel’s story. As He had delivered the people out of Egypt by cutting a path for them through the Red Sea, so He would deliver them into the land with another path across the Jordan River. The people were still encamped on the east side of the river at Shittim, maybe waiting for the spies to return from Jericho, when Joshua woke up early in the morning, eager to get to the Jordan River. As far as he was concerned, only the river stood between Israel and control of the land. After all, God had promised to be with him, and Joshua had been appointed by Moses as God’s choice for His replacement as leader of Israel. Nothing could stand between him and God’s promises. Even so, the people were about to go into a land they did not know. How could they be sure that God would be with them? How could they even be sure they would survive the journey that seemed finally so near its goal?

Joshua’s instructions to Israel affirmed that they would succeed in crossing the flooded Jordan River because God would accomplish it for them. The Ark of the Covenant, which contained Moses’ staff and the tablets with the Ten Commandments, would be “carried by the Levitical priests” (Joshua 3:3). The Levites had been specially chosen by God to be the tribe of priests within his holy nation (Numbers 3:6-13). No one else in Israel was to touch the ark. In fact, when crossing the river, the nation was to be especially careful not to walk too closely to it. God would be present among them. For this reason, the people had to consecrate themselves much as they had at the Red Sea. Although no instructions are given for this specific consecration, similar rituals were likely involved: washing clothes, keeping their distance from God’s holiness and abstaining from sex (see Exodus 19:10-15). These guidelines were meant to heighten the nation’s awareness that they were God’s holy people, about to be in the presence of their holy God.

Everything that Joshua told the people in preparation for crossing the river served both as instruction and assurance of their success both at the river and later in the land:

*“Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites and the Jebusites. Behold, the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan. Now therefore take 12 men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall*

*rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap” (Joshua 3:10-13).*

It was necessary to cross the river in order to be in the Promised Land, and the manner in which the people would cross the water would be a sign of their continuing success. The flooded river would stop and God would guide His people.

Three days of preparation are over; now the nation will pass through the river. The moment the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant touched the river’s edge with their feet, the Jordan River stopped flowing near the town of Adam, its waters piling up in a heap. As the waters were stopped and piled up by God, the people passed into the Promised Land. They walked on dry ground, just as their ancestors had when they passed through the Red Sea. As long as the priests stood in the middle of the river, the people could pass by to the land of their inheritance. Their hero who had brought the people out of Egypt under Moses’ leadership showed His continuing care for them now under Joshua’s leadership at the Jordan River. Surely such great signs and wonders would inspire unwavering faith and obedience in the people.

### Discussion:

1. How does realizing that God is the hero of each story change our perspectives on our own trials and triumphs?
2. In what ways can we prepare and sanctify ourselves as we carry out God’s will?
3. What are stories in our own lives, or the lives of those we know, where God removed barriers or helped us through barriers to accomplish His purposes?

**To access the complete study guide, visit [summercelebration.lipscomb.edu](http://summercelebration.lipscomb.edu) and click on “2014 Resource Kit.”**

**\*Study guide developed by Jane Ann Kenney and Phillip Camp of Lipscomb’s Hazelip School of Theology.**

Summer Celebration 2014

[servingchurches.lipscomb.edu](http://servingchurches.lipscomb.edu)

# Reviving *the* Mission

insights from Joshua

Discussion Guide Joseph Shulam and David Skidmore

1 Read **Joshua 1 and 4**

2 Watch **the keynotes**  
[bit.ly/sc2014shulam](http://bit.ly/sc2014shulam)  
[bit.ly/sc2014skidmore](http://bit.ly/sc2014skidmore)

3 Discuss **the questions below**

## Joseph Shulam

Strength and Courage to Lead—Joshua 1:1-11

### Discussion questions:

1. Israel grieved the loss of Moses. What is it that we need to admit we are grieving?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How is our world changing and our comforts being taken away?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why is it so important for believers to be strong and courageous?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What role does God's Word play in giving us this strength?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Is God more ready to "move on" and cross rivers than we are? Why is that?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Application:

1. Spend some time journaling with God, admitting the things we are grieving—and from which we need to move on.
2. Practice meditating daily on a small portion of Scripture (try starting with Psalm 1).
3. Encourage someone else to be strong and courageous while being so yourself!

## David Skidmore

Watch the First Restoration Here—Joshua 4:5-12

### Discussion questions:

1. Share the name of someone in your congregation growing up who "wore the varnish off the communion table" through their faithful service. What about their life has slowly become a part of your life?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Can you name three people in your life today who are "rock carrying priests" whose intentional, purposeful lives make you ask "What does this mean?"  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What are some specific ways in which their walks with the Lord point you to God or make you want to hear their story?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Application:

1. How might you serve as a rock-carrying priest for someone in your youth group? What "story" do you have that has a deeper meaning and points to the greatness of God?
2. Get a small vase and fill it with 12 small rocks (either found rocks or smooth stones you can purchase from a craft store). Once a month for a year, as a family write on the rocks with a marker ways God has rescued, provided for, or brought healing to a member of your family. In other words, write a remembrance on each stone and have it on display in a prominent place so that you might remember what the Lord has done.

**To access the video and study guide, visit [summercelebration.lipscomb.edu](http://summercelebration.lipscomb.edu) and click on "2014 Resource Kit."**

## A SERMON ON INTERGENERATIONAL RESPECT

# *Cutting the older generation some slack*

*BY SCOTT SAGER*

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Poor Noah, by anyone's account he had a rough last 100 years or so. Born to be a farmer, God had placed in Noah the hope of the entire world. When Noah found grace in God's eyes, it immediately made him a carpenter. God laid out a plan for the "ark-itecture," and Noah and his three young sons got busy collecting the wood, constructing the vessel and preparing for the coming of all the animals.

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Noah was 500 years old when he began this monumental project, and for 100 years he built, he fathered his family, and he preached about God's judgment and grace. The animals showed up and the rain began to fall.

Noah spent just over a year on the open sea with an ark full of animals before he and his family left the vessel. The ark was his bunker, and restoring civilization was his charge. After a year he found himself on the top of Mount Ararat, the door swung open to a world returned to pristine splendor, and, as God's second Adam, Noah entered a new creation.

Noah went back to his roots, back to farming. For the past 100 years Noah had been too busy saving the world to enjoy the pleasantries of his former life. But now he could kick his feet up and enjoy himself, remembering all the good times he had shared with friends, and then it hit him...

Most of the people he had enjoyed spending time with had died in the flood! Now there was no one his age and with his shared life experiences left in the world. We're told Noah began drinking, more and more. Soon he was drunk and went back to his tent to sleep. He tore off his clothes, but before he could get into bed, he





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*THEY REMEMBERED THEIR DAD'S HOLY  
FEAR AND DEEP DEVOTION TO GOD. THEY  
REMEMBERED HIS TRUSTING FAITH EVEN AS  
THE WORLD DOUBTED.*

---

passed out naked on the floor of the tent.

The youngest of Noah's three sons, Ham, went looking for Noah early the next morning and found his dad exposed. When Ham realized what he had witnessed, it struck him that he had found his father in the most compromising of positions. Ham smiled and began to laugh at his father. He went like a bad tabloid to tell his brothers. He wanted his brothers to join in his laughter and, in doing so, share in his contempt for their old man. But Ham's brothers, Shem and Japheth, were too wise to get sucked into such a despicable scene.

They reasoned, "If our father had found grace in God's eyes, then shouldn't he find grace in our eyes as well?" They had watched their dad work tirelessly and faithfully for more than 100 years. They knew it was their dad's faith that had preserved them and that all that was right and good about the life they were now living could be tied back to him. They remembered their dad's holy fear and deep devotion to God. They remembered his trusting faith even as the world doubted. They recalled the integrity their dad had displayed in preaching righteousness to every person who showed up to ridicule them for building a giant barge on dry land.

Recalling this about their faithful father, Shem and Japheth resolved not to laugh. They resolved not to look. They resolved to cover Noah up without creating a cover-up. So

Shem and Japheth went and found a blanket. Shem held one side while Japheth held the other. Walking into Noah's tent backwards, with their faces looking the other way, the two boys draped a blanket over their dad without ever needing to gaze at his nakedness.

Fast forward to today. Members of the Church of Christ have plenty of our own "Noah moments." In each of our histories is at least one event where we made the wrong decision. Probably more than one. Some of us have proudly boasted of being "the only Christians." Others of us have "gotten drunk" on superior intellect.

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***ONE DAY SOME GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
WILL QUESTION OUR WISDOM AND WONDER  
WHY WE DREW THE LINES WHERE WE DID.***

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We've gotten drunk on the pride of our positions and left ourselves exposed to anyone who opens the doors to our churches and realizes our nakedness.

So how should we respond when one of our older brothers' and sisters' "moments of nakedness" come to light? Jesus gives us three possibilities in his parable of the Good Samaritan:

First, we can behave like the priest in Jesus' story who represents the religious establishment of his day. When we spot the nakedness of others, including the Christian generations before us, we can chuckle under our breath, shake our head in mock disgust and pass on by on the other side. We

often do this because we believe we are more intelligent, more open-minded and more sophisticated than they. Seeing ourselves as a more enlightened Christian, we feel free then to make fun of our past, be embarrassed about our heritage and feel secure in our claims to be more spiritually attuned. It feels good to pass by on the other side when you can do so with such a sense of moral superiority.

A second option is to respond like the Levite in Jesus' story. Clearly the Levites took their lead from the priests, yet the Levite does appear to get a little closer to the action on the side of the road. He appears

to at least examine what is taking place and, perhaps, wanted to be sympathetic. But social pressure is a powerful thing. If religious leaders are

beating their breasts and treating with ridicule the one on the side of the road, then clearly they should too. So the Levite joins in the condemnation and ridicule and shakes his head as well at the poor choices that led the beaten man to his place in the ditch.

Of course there is a third way to proceed, the way of the Good Samaritan. He was willing to show genuine compassion and even pity for the naked man fallen on the side of the road. There is no hint of religious superiority in his response and no sense of pride. What he saw was a naked man who did not need to be left in that condition—and so he acted. Getting off his animal, he knelt and used oil and wine, a bandage and a

donkey to bring this fallen man back to where he belonged. Jesus said it was the neighborly thing to do. Shem and Japheth might add it is the brotherly thing to do as well.

Our forefathers in the Restoration Movement have, for the most part, been spiritual, godly, brilliant women and men of great faith. If, as we study their lives, we find a moment where they are exposed (spiritually speaking) why should we be so surprised? They were as fragilely human as we are. It is easy to laugh—ask Ham—but then God is not honored, and we become smaller every time we do so.

It is difficult to get off your donkey and bear the burdens of someone who went before you. As you enter into their world you might ask yourself, “What may have caused them to act as they did?” “What can I learn from their mistakes that can help me?” Even harder still is to make the decision that while others laugh, you will bind up the wounds of your forefathers and carry them back to the inn. Like Noah’s wise sons, we can cover up the nakedness of those who went before us, and we can do it without it being a “cover-up.” We do not say it never happened; we just quit picking at the scab that is causing it to bleed again and again. Oil and wine in the hands of a Good Samaritan can allow years of scabbing and bleeding to finally heal.

Unless the Lord returns again very soon, our day of being exposed will come. One day, some group of young people will happen upon some poor decision we have made. They will gaze upon us—exposed as broken jars of clay. They will question our wisdom, and wonder why we drew lines where we did.

Here’s hoping, in the spirit of Shem and Japheth, someone drops a blanket over our nakedness instead. Perhaps they will think of how hard we tried and all the ways God used us for good. Then they might get down off their horses and bind up the wounds of their forefathers and carry us back to the inn.

It’s much more likely to happen, though, if they see us doing so first.

# Supporting our church faith. Serving our church families.

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## *Ministering to the mind, body and soul*



*“Our society values the material world, the physical aspect of the person, yet the physical declines and the body ultimately dies. Rarely do we talk of the need to continue growing throughout the lifespan. Because we spend so much time worrying about the decline of the body, we can overlook the need and opportunity to grow in other areas, particular in wisdom and grace.”*

*The Challenges to Growth in Middle and Later Life*  
Jane M. Thibault, University of Louisville Medical School

The church at Harpeth Hills recognizes that we should be a community that values people at every stage of life. Churches, in general, should be places that enhance the aging experience by helping older adults find meaning and purpose in their lives through ministries that serve, educate and encourage.

The creation of the Harpeth Hills Resource Center on Aging was designed to help accommodate this goal. The stated

mission of the ministry is “to provide collaborative faith-based services that meet the health and wellness needs of the whole person.” This includes the Harpeth Hills church family as well as an outreach to a broader community.

In addition to the church’s ministry and support staff, an advisory group was created to allow us to create and advance community partnerships among religious, health care, social and civic organizations. We want to partner with

*“Spiritual needs are a consequence of an inherent human impulse to relate to God, and also reflect God’s influence on and desire to relate to humanity. They stem from a recognition that human life is finite and that there is a higher purpose to which men are called.”*

### *Aging and God—Harold G. Koenig*

entities such as universities, hospitals, hospice care and aging service organizations. All bring a valuable piece to the table.

We are very intentional in being inclusive rather than isolating any segment of our congregation. While we have both children and youth ministries that are widely recognized and touch hundreds of lives, we also have more than three hundred members over the age of 60, the oldest being 97. For the most part, our cohort of 70-year-olds are at the core of leadership and involvement.

#### **Some resources we make available at the Resource Center on Aging include:**

**Family Conversations:** This 13-week series is a biblical study of legacy. These are discussions every family should have regarding generational planning, caregiving and end-of-life issues.

**Christian Formation:** Emphasis is placed in general Bible class curriculum and periodic special electives on both the spiritual needs of older adults and the practice of spiritual disciplines.

**Direct Family Support:** Personal meetings are provided to family members who are facing tough

decisions concerning aging, care of a loved one and/or end-of-life issues. We also serve as a referral source to appropriate health care, faith-based, educational and provider networks. Last year 44 percent of families served were non-Harpeth Hills members.

**Care Management:** The center provides the services of a social worker to walk with individuals and families with whom we directly work to assist in decision making.

**Legacy Fund:** This is an endowment receptacle to assist both Harpeth Hills members and other Christians in fulfilling their need to be good stewards over God’s blessings.

**Caregiver Support Group:** In collaboration with the Alzheimer’s Association of Middle Tennessee, we offer a support group that meets monthly and is open to the community.

**Respite Care:** This service offers short-term and crisis care to Harpeth Hills members through a client relationship with a non-medical home service provider.

**Grief and Loss Support:** Grief recovery and clinical counseling services are provided in cooperation with the Harpeth Hills Counseling Center.

**Wellness 66:** This collaboration with TriStar Centennial Parthenon Pavilion offers educational seminars that are mind, body and spirit oriented. Continuing education credit is made available through the psychology department of Lipscomb University.

#### **Intentional Older Adult Ministry Network:**

We are a participant in this peer learning network among area faith communities, which meets monthly on the campus of Lipscomb University. It is an outreach of the School of TransformAging®.

**“Aging Matters:”** Our center has been a contributor to this multi-year documentary series, designed to open a community-based conversation about what Middle Tennessee’s older citizens need to optimize their quality of life and what the community can do to prepare for a coming explosion in our aging population. Visit [www.wnpt.org/program/npt-reports-aging-matters/](http://www.wnpt.org/program/npt-reports-aging-matters/) to watch previous videos.

**James Vandiver**

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# Spiritual formation *for older adults*



**God has been forming older adults for his special purposes for a long time. The names of Abraham, Sarah, Hannah, Zacharias, Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna quickly come to mind.**

God's care for older people is reflected in the fact that more than 250 passages in the Old Testament are concerned with "old age." Included among these passages is a beautiful prayer in Psalm 79: "Do not cast me off when old age comes or forsake me as my strength fails."

In the biblical world of the first century, the average life expectancy is estimated to have been 25 years. The percentage of people over 65 years of age is estimated to have been 5 to 10 percent of the population. In contrast to this scarcity of older people in the New Testament world, life expectancy climbed in the United States during the 20th century from 47 years to 79 years. By 2017, nearly one-half of the U.S. population will be over 50. Some experts believe the average lifespan in developed nations could exceed 100 years by the end of this century.

Today's older Americans typically enjoy ten or more healthy years than the immediately preceding generation did. This brings numerous challenges to older people. These challenges may be physical, mental, psychological or spiritual in nature. Several students of gerontology (e.g., Harold Koenig, David Moburg, Elizabeth MacKinlay) have made detailed lists of eight spiritual issues that become more acute as we grow older.

## **Harold Hazelip**

*Minister of Spiritual Formation  
Harpeth Hills Church of Christ  
President Emeritus, Lipscomb University*



## **Spiritual Issues in Aging**

**The need for meaning, purpose and hope.** A basic question we face is, "Who am I when I am not what I used to do?" For much of our lives we are known by our job title. What am I becoming now that my career days are completed? Loss of meaning intensifies with disabling or life-threatening illness. As our strength dwindles, our need for a philosophy that gives meaning to life increases. Victor Frankl's experience in the Holocaust led him to conclude, "Those who have a why to live can bear with almost any how."

**The need to maintain self-esteem amid changing circumstances.** Job loss also means loss of an admired position. And our losses multiply! Reduced hearing, declining vision and general lack of sharpness may follow. Unpleasant diagnostic tests and frequent hospitalizations can affect our self-esteem.

But life after 65 is not a disease. In 2005, only 7 percent of people ages 75 to 84, and only 25 percent of those over 84, needed help with daily personal care. Only 5 percent of those over 65 are in special care institutions. Total incapacity, on average, only lasts three months of life. We must approach our mature years positively or waste almost 30 percent of our lives.

**The need for reassurance and support.** Loneliness is still the most striking feature of growing old in America. Margaret Mead said that the deepest human need is to have someone care if we come home late at night. In our judicial system, the worst punishment permitted by law, short of execution, is solitary confinement. The older person may be removed from her home and surroundings with little or nothing to say about this choice. A sense of belonging is very important for peace of mind.

**The need to participate in worship and fellowship activities.** We have practiced faith all of our lives. Faith in our parents when we were very young, faith in banks, in credentials of those we deal with, in government to assure safety and fairness. Now we cannot be in charge anymore. We rely heavily on prayer and the promises of Scripture.

**The need to feel loved and lovable.** We may have become accustomed to the barter system in relationships. “You do this for me and I will reciprocate! If you stop...” Now, we can’t keep up the bargain. To know we are accepted, valued and cared for, regardless of performance, is vital to our mental health.

**The need to be able to express anger and doubt.** Confronted with illness or tragedy, we may feel alienated from God. We may question God, as Job did: “Even today my thoughts are embittered, for God’s hand is heavy on me in my trouble. If only I knew how to reach him” (Job 23). The Bible presents the story of Job’s reaction to suffering as acceptable with God. When anger becomes less intense, we may come to believe again that God is with us. Prayer, reading Scripture or interaction with a fellow Christian may help us find faith again.

**The need to focus on others’ needs.** Karl Menninger, famous psychiatrist, said that if one is not allowed (or able) to serve others, one’s own well-being is affected. When asked what he would do if he thought he was losing his mind, Menninger said he would immediately find someone in worse condition than himself and help that person.

**Focus on others**—family, friends, staff members who serve you. More than 150 Bible verses stress the need “to be thankful.” Estranged family members need to be forgiven. Many studies have focused on the harmful effects of pent-up hostility and anger on our cardiovascular health. Unburden yourself—and the other person!

**The need to prepare for death and dying.** One problem with the books on death and dying is that they are all written by people who haven’t done it. A fatal diagnosis would overwhelm almost anyone. To the extent that we are able to prepare for death, we will be better prepared to live until we die. The strong affirmation of Christian faith is that our experience will not end at death.

## Christian Formation in Later Life

There are many compelling reasons to enjoy a vibrant faith during our older years. Many have found their faith strengthened by following Christian disciplines. Here are four practices that seem especially appropriate for seniors:

**Meditative Bible Reading.** Engage in slow, thoughtful reading of brief sections of Scripture. Ten to 15 minutes each day spent with 10–15 verses of Scripture may be approached in four steps: read the text aloud to yourself; reflect on what you find in the reading; respond in prayer to what arises in your mind during reading; and rest briefly as you contemplate silently after prayer.

**Prayer.** From the cross, Jesus prayed two brief prayers that were the actual words of Scripture. Try praying Psalm 23 in the first person: “Lord, you are my Shepherd; I lack for nothing.” Or, build a prayer on Jesus’ beatitudes: “Lord, help me to be a peacemaker so that I may be called a child of God.” Pray about an instance where you would like to make peace.

**Hospitality.** Older people who are confined by illness have sometimes stopped eating when they felt abandoned by family and friends. Opening your heart to the needs of others is genuine hospitality. The awareness of the presence of God increases when genuinely cared for by other people.

**Self-examination.** Take a few moments at the close of the day to thank God for gifts you have received. Review thoughts, words and deeds of the day. Ask God for forgiveness and strength. Ask God for the wisdom to know the good you can share with others.

What we seek in Christian formation is what Melvin Kimble (*Aging, Spirituality and Religion*) defines as successful aging: “...to feel satisfied and fulfilled, to be loved and loving, to have hope and a sense of the future.”

# Starting a vibrant older adult ministry

**The fastest-growing age demographic in many of our congregations is older adults. We can be “light-years” behind the curve and ignore a vital resource for church vitality and growth, or we can be enlightened to the special gifts that older adults offer in a proactive way. God has given us the gift of longer life. How has your congregation responded to this great gift of wisdom and experience?**

More people are living longer than ever before. New medical knowledge, life-sustaining technologies and a greater awareness of, and desire for, a healthy lifestyle have helped lengthen the lives of those who reach old age.

The fact that more people are reaching their senior years and that communities are experiencing an explosion in the aging population should not be cause for alarm. While more people are living a longer life, some 20 to 30 years or more beyond the “normal” retirement age, they are spending most of these later years in generally good health.

Because aging is changing, the nature of ministry with older persons is also changing. When I served as a chaplain in a nursing home some 30 years ago, the average age of admission was about 65. Today the average age of admission is closer to 85. People want to age in place, within their own homes and communities, and most are able to do so. Intentional ministry with senior adults is not something that is done only in nursing home settings.

Churches genuinely concerned about the faith development of all God’s people will want to be intentional in developing a vibrant ministry with older adults. Unfortunately, when older adults see little interest directed at them by their churches, they gradually lose their sense of value and worth, which dampens and diminishes their faith development.

One important ministry model for congregations seeking to develop a vibrant ministry with older adults is the S.E.N.I.O.R.S. ministry model. This model is both an intentional and holistic approach to senior adult ministry.

**Rev. Richard H. Gentzler Jr.**  
*Adjunct Professor, Lipscomb University  
School of TransformAging®*



**Spiritual:** I don’t know anywhere in the Bible where it says that God takes away His blessing when a person reaches the age of 65. God does have much to say in Scripture about aging, which is a gift from God and has a purpose. In Job, the question is asked, “Is wisdom with the aged and understanding in length of days?” (12:12). An answer is given in Proverbs: “Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life” (16:31).

Helping older adults in their spiritual journey is vital for the later years. Worship, Bible study, prayer groups, church school, spiritual journaling classes and healing services are just some of the many ways congregations can be encouraging and instrumental in their faith development. Holding special Sunday afternoon worship services for the homebound, taking communion to home-centered members who cannot attend and starting a friendly visitors’ ministry are a few additional opportunities.

**Enrichment:** Older adults, no less than other people, want to continue learning. And in our fast-paced and changing society, seniors need opportunities to continue the lifelong process of learning and growing.

Churches can be intentional in helping older adults learn and grow by providing information and classroom situations related to their needs and concerns. Issues related to health and finances are important, as well as political concerns and the environment. Learning about computers, the Internet and the latest technology can be especially valuable to many seniors. Opportunities for expanding horizons through travel and mission trips can enhance personal enrichment for older adults as well as providing a sense of meaning and purpose.

**Nutrition (Wellness):** As we grow older, our recuperative powers diminish. Thus, we accumulate a distressing collection of chronic conditions. Some of these are no more than a minor nuisance, and we adapt as best we can. Some conditions are more serious, involving severe disability and pain and may eventually become life threatening. Churches



play an important role in the physical well-being of seniors. Providing meals, holding exercise classes and offering adult day services are just some of the many ways congregations are involved in the care of older adults. With changes in health care, pensions and federal insurance programs, congregations are urged to enlist and train volunteers to serve as congregational care teams. Many congregations also have a parish nurse on staff who, not only does regular blood pressure screenings but also helps educate the whole congregation about health and wellness.

**I**ntergenerational: A vibrant senior ministry is also an intergenerational ministry. Intentional ministry with seniors does not negate our concern for the younger generation. We need one another, and this need expresses itself in healthy relationships through nurturing and caring opportunities. No generation or group of people holds all knowledge, faith or wisdom. Old and young alike should be encouraged to work, play and study together.

The benefits are many when older adults are invited and equipped to serve as volunteers in programs serving younger age groups, such as mentoring teens and young married adults, tutoring children or being foster grandparents. Younger and older people can be teamed up together to provide particular ministries, such as working to clean up the environment, visiting people who are homebound or in prison, participating in short-term mission projects or attending weekend spiritual retreats.

**O**utreach: In efforts to reach others with the Good News, training and equipping older adults to be engaged in outreach opportunities should not be ignored, and senior adults should not be underutilized in this great endeavor. In addition, churches must be engaged in outreach to all persons, regardless of age or stage in life. Older adults can be the purveyors of the Good News, but they should also be the recipients. All

too often, our view of church growth is reaching out only to persons under the age of 35 rather than to people of all ages.

**R**ecreation: Older adults can literally think themselves into the grave by engaging in negative thoughts about getting older. Attitude is an important index in prolonging life expectancy. The ability to recreate gives persons the chance to re-create themselves. Laughter, fun, humor and play are all vital ingredients for the well-being of senior adults.

Fellowship meals, game days and travel events are a few ways congregations can involve older adults in recreation. Holding golf or fishing outings, arts and crafts, quilting circles and senior theater are additional ways to energize older adults for fun and play.

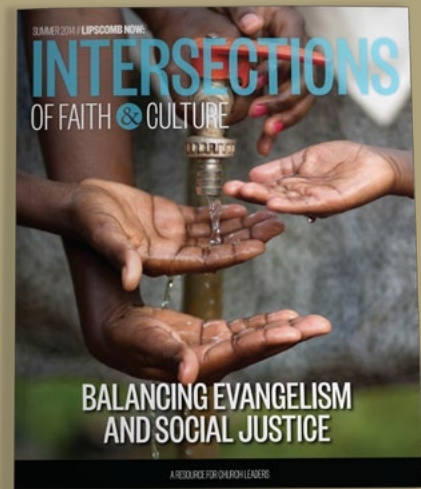
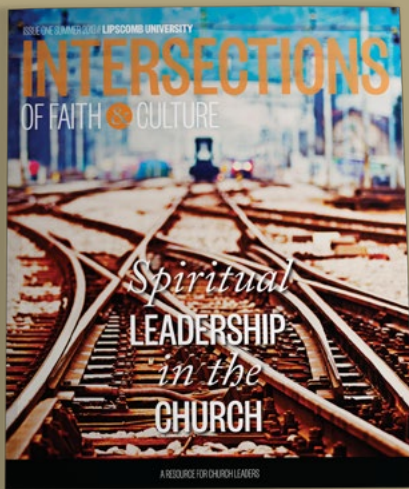
**S**ervice: Helping to meet the needs of others can provide an ongoing sense of purpose for seniors. Involving them in community service opportunities helps senior adults gain or maintain a sense of self-worth and allows them to feel useful and needed.

There are countless opportunities available for older adults to be in service. They can serve others in their role as caregivers or by preparing meals, providing transportation, engaging in active listening, serving on a church committee, teaching in Sunday school or singing in the choir. Congregations should encourage seniors to be in service to the needs of others and congregations must be willing to equip, train and support older adults in these endeavors.

**Richard H. Gentzler is a nationally recognized teacher and speaker in aging and older adult ministry. He is author of numerous books, including *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century: An Inquiry Approach*.**



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